

1984

## Poems

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Poems

Abstract

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# Peter Christensen

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## THE ANGEL OF MY TONGUE

I lie  
dry sticks in the sun  
and befriend  
the mouth of fire

I will be judged  
by earth and wind  
there will be serpent tongues

In the dry season  
I will be afraid

The savannah must burn  
Deer run  
in the hot blast  
Mice cower  
in their tunnels  
like brains

## DEEP SLAB INSTABILITY

The avalanche man sips his yellow beer  
tell tale fan at the corner of the eyes  
squint the snowfields so bright and clean  
And he remember the saying  
All the experts are dead

In a layer of snow  
is hidden the amorphous kiss  
that sends the body  
tumbling down the slide path  
to a frozen ungracious event

The rocks scoured bare  
rushing furries blast  
down the mountain  
through black firs  
married to white  
under the thunder  
of a racing white machine

## HORSE POOR

She fed the horses every night till he  
started coming home drunk and hitting the  
bedroom walls with a piece of chain and wouldn't  
remember a dam thing next morning and then another  
fight. The kids are sent to do chores and the  
lights in the house dim for no other reason than  
Henry the ghost, long dead cousin, is around again.

She started going to college, wants to go to  
Africa. Wants to study about Katherine the Great  
who somehow lives in her. Wants to get ready for  
the break when the money comes in. The city is  
eating the farm.

Maybe she doesn't want to try one more time.  
And the kids come home from school, she dreams of  
freedom and the horses are for sale. And the goddam  
stallion broke the fences down again and near killed  
one of the mares. And he is sober and locks the  
horses in his solitude while she dreams.

## WILDERNESS IS A STATE OF MIND

In the river bottom we will search  
for poles to build a platform  
on which to set a hollow mountain  
and from its pedestal proclaim  
the era of management  
the end of acts of god  
as spirits leave the forest  
so dies the mountain

## PREDATORS

Along the highways  
travellers are in collision  
the elk struggles  
into the meadow  
into the daybed  
where he stiffens  
until the cold or  
wolves eat his brain

Wind hustles the tops  
of lodgepole pine  
spreads the message around

In the hard grey light of morning  
the carved nostrils  
of greasy black ravens  
split the scent of carrion  
prepare for council  
their prayer wheel tightens  
down to eyes first  
to the steaming gut pile  
beautiful life